

VZCZCXRO6932  
RR RUEHPA  
DE RUEHFN #0251 1511121  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 301121Z MAY 08  
FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1934  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L FREETOWN 000251

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/30/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SL](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER TO FOCUS ON ECONOMIC  
ISSUES

Classified By: Ambassador June Carter Perry for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. SUMMARY (C) On May 22, Ambassador Perry met with Godson Echegile, the new Nigerian High Commissioner to Sierra Leone. Also in attendance were the Poloff and the Nigerian Minister, Mohammed Bambale. Ambassador welcomed the High Commissioner, who arrived in Freetown two weeks ago. This is his first foreign posting after many years spent in the private banking sector. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) During the brief discussion, High Commissioner Echegile stated his concerns regarding Sierra Leone's fragile economy, particularly high unemployment and lack of capital inflows. Given his business experience, he plans to facilitate his government to further assist in building the financial infrastructure, with a focus on encouraging more foreign direct investment. He noted that seven Nigerian banks will be operational in Sierra Leone by the end of 2008, and that Nigeria's experience throughout the 1990s in building their capacity and infrastructure in various business sectors will be useful for Sierra Leone to draw from in the future.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Perry thanked the High Commissioner for his comments, and remarked on the close and congenial relationship between the U.S. and Nigerian governments. Nigeria has long been a valuable ally and partner in Africa as a continent, but particularly in West Africa. Ambassador stated her interest in maintaining regular and open lines of communication with the High Commission, in keeping with the collaborative nature of the diplomatic relationship, and High Commissioner Echegile agreed.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Having been in Sierra Leone for only a short time, the High Commissioner provided little insight on areas of interest to the Government of Nigeria beyond the financial sector. Given the number of Nigerian banks operating in Sierra Leone, his connection to the banking world, including a stint at Citibank, could have been a factor in his selection for this particular post. Despite his inexperience in the diplomatic arena, he will be ably assisted by Mr. Bambale, who served under the previous High Commissioner. END COMMENT.  
PERRY